

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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## **Mexican Court finds Phoenix Murder Suspect Guilty**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – July 2, 2004) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard announced today the conviction of Pedro Santana Cortes for the 1998 murder of Arturo Banuelos Escalante. Cortes shot and killed Escalante outside of the "El Torito" restaurant located at the Phoenix Metrocenter shopping mall.

On May 30, 1998, Cortes began to argue with the victim over a financial dispute. Cortes pulled a handgun and shot Escalante in the head, killing him. Cortes left the scene and fled to Mexico.

Cortes was found guilty on April 22 in a Mexican court for the 1998 homicide, and was sentenced to 35 years. Arizona received notification of this conviction this week. He will serve his prison sentence in Mexico.

The Attorney General's Office prosecuted this case in conjunction with the Mexican Attorney General (Procuraduria General de la Republica) utilizing Article IV of the Mexican Federal Penal Code. This provision allows Mexican nationals to be tried in Mexico for crimes committed outside of their country.

"This conviction is the result of the continuing cooperation between my office and the Mexican Federal Attorney General's Office," Goddard said. "This partnership is vital to obtaining justice for Arizona's crime victims when suspects flee across the border."

Cortes will serve the 35 year sentence in its entirety. The Mexican criminal justice system does not provide for parole or early release. Cortes' appeal is in process and is expected to be settled in the next six months.

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